LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND CONTENT KNOWLEDGE OF ENGLISH AMONG +2 STUDENTS IN RELATION TO LOCALITY AND STREAM OF STUDY

A
SYNOPSIS

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Introduction

"The first sound a child makes on coming into the world is one of discomfort, it is a cry, a reflex action and the child does not expect a response."

A child's first cry makes sure that he is alive. In the beginning the child does not know how to behave in a social context and cannot even express himself. Gradually he learns to crawl, walk and ultimately talk. As a child grows up he tries to express himself through his limited vocabulary. He soon learns to correlate the meanings. A child comes into the world with everything to learn or experience. The need of language can be realized best by those who suffer from the loss of speech, though it is beyond their power to explain it. In fact, we take speech for granted and are hardly aware of our interdependence upon it. It is difficult to conceive a society without it. Language seems to have born with the inception of the human race, so the credit goes to it for helping the survival of mankind. Not only this, it has also helped our race to mature by transmitting our culture and civilization to coming generations.

The enormous development in various walks of our life has been possible only through language. Science, Technology, Religion, Art could make progress only with the help of language. Bloomfield says that each community is formed by the activity of language. Hence in order to know the culture of some people it is essential to know the language of these people. Man is gifted with a rare quality of speech, which is defined to the other living beings. No doubt, birds, insects and animals produce particular sounds in a given situation, but these sounds cannot be called 'speech' and hence they do not 'talk'. In other words only man is gifted with this special type of communication. Dechant writes, "Man like the animal, can

communicate through taste, touch and smell and through grunts and groans, but he also can learn to communicate through language or verbal symbolism. He alone has the ability to name his concepts."

Language is not merely the medium of instruction at all levels of education, it is the medium of growth. It provides capacity for preservation and communication of intellectual life. At higher level, language provides the medium of fresh and free thinking and research. In education it is supposed to communicate knowledge, and in general life it is the instrument to pick up information. We need language to learn, to retain and to recall our knowledge. It is the primary need of the child.

In countries where only one language is spoken, there is no problem for the child, because he has to develop proficiency only in one language. But, in a country like India where there is multiplicity of languages, there is the problem of intercommunication. This is the reason why in India normally a child knows two or three languages. Besides the languages of Indian origin, English has attained an important place in Indian life and society. The main reason is that India had a rich past and hence was attracted by different communities who invaded it from time to time. When two cultures come in contact a new culture is born. This has an impact on language also. Hence during the Muslim rule in our country Arabic and Persian, and during the British rule, English was introduced in India. The seeds of English language were laid in Indian soil in the last decades of the 18th century. Charles Grant was perhaps the first person to plead for English language in India. He felt that the state of Indians was miserable and can only improve "if Indians were first educated and finally converted into Christianity." Later on, in the early nineteenth century in the regime of Lord William Bentinck English became the medium of instruction by the able advocacy of Macauley and support of Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Its use got extended to the political and cultural life of India as well as to

business and commerce. English language slowly became the language of 'elite' class and of social prestige. Thus during the British rule in India, English enjoyed the most key position in the life of educational set up of our country, but after the independence this position took a set back as it was replaced to some extent by our national language and other regional languages as medium of instruction. English no longer occupied the pride of place in the courses at school level, and was relegated to second or even third place

Throughout India, there is an extraordinary belief, among almost all castes and classes, in both rural and urban areas, in the transformative power of English. English is seen not just as a useful skill, but as a symbol of a better life, a pathway out of poverty and oppression. Aspiration of such magnitude is a heavy burden for any language, and for those who have responsibility for teaching it, to bear. The challenges of providing universal access to English are significant, and many are bound to feel frustrated at the speed of progress. But we cannot ignore the way that the English language has emerged as a powerful agent for change in India.

English language has assumed a very important position and status in the modern world. The importance of English has been felt strongly in all spheres. With the advent of globalization, the whole world has been undergoing a radical transformation. As a matter of fact, English has become a vehicle of interaction not only in India but with entire international community as well. English has achieved a global status and has emerged as the lingua-franca of the world. Moreover, English language has been recognized as an international language throughout the world and the need for acquiring communicative competence in English will ever be felt in all circles. That's the reason that everyone seems to be strongly motivated to learn it though knowing at the same time that it will take a great deal to master it.

English today is almost a compulsory second language. Once deprived sections of the society now perceive the language as an instrument for progress. However, the public's demands are not being met meaningfully. Most schools in the country do not have the facilities and proficient teachers needed to cater to the demand. As mentioned above, meaningful language education requires teachers who are skilled and knowledgeable as well as contextualized materials (print and others). But an enabling English language environment in the school also needs to be ensured. The most important of these three prerequisites is the English teacher, but the English language proficiency of English language teachers in quite a number of schools is questionable. Consequently, teacher education is one major area which needs drastic changes if quality teachers are to become available. Materials development (particularly textbooks) for the teaching and learning of English has not yet been professionalised. On the contrary, materials development has been commercialised to the extent that India now has thousands of publishers who publish English language textbooks. An enabling English language environment also cannot be created overnight. Learners need to experience appropriate input so that they can become engaged with the language, but a language teacher who himself or herself does not possess the required proficiency cannot create such an environment. Children need to feel the language in the air in school because, for the vast majority of children, English is not available outside school. The creation of such an enabling environment has to be encouraged through curricular and other activities in and outside school. The circumstances and demands of language learning contexts are closely linked to successful academic English language acquisition. The substantial difference between the language used in school and language used in conversation with friends and family is especially pronounced for adolescent students. The oral and written language skills necessary to succeed in the academic context of middle and high school is

complex and includes the capacity to summarize texts by inferring unstated meanings, analyze texts by explicitly commenting on the author's use of language and genre features, critique argumentation and underlying assumptions, explicitly define concepts, assess the grammaticality of complex sentences, and write and discuss long, coherent texts that conform to implicit genre expectations and reference other texts. Confronted with the complexity and high stakes of learning English in post primary settings, a host of other factors may come into play for adolescent second language learners including motivational correlates (e.g., frustration, embarrassment, and anxiety), values and beliefs, and behavioral outcomes such as disengagement from school. The importance of better understanding adolescent English language learning is evidenced in the widening gap between English learners and their native English speaking peers throughout childhood and adolescence. Because of the complexity of language learning in middle and high school contexts, generalization from children to adolescents is difficult. Studying young language learners, Cummins (1991, 2000) proposed that nonacademic, conversational language skills can be learned within about 2 years, whereas academic language, which is less contextualized and more cognitively demanding, can take much longer to acquire.

Measures of language proficiency, however, vary widely in the literature, making comparisons across groups difficult. Language-proficiency constructs that have been assessed range from oral to literate skills and from conversational to academic registers. Few studies have compared different groups of English language learners using the same norm-referenced proficiency measures, and even fewer studies have been conducted with secondary-level students.

Language Proficiency

The Language Proficiency Standards provide expectations for the foundational linguistic knowledge for students who are not proficient in English. These language skills are necessary in order for language learners to access academic content.

The Language Domains

The primary use of the language proficiency standards is to guide curriculum development and alignment, instruction, and assessment for language learners. In doing so, the Language proficiency standards, by incorporating the language of the classroom as well as that of the academic subject areas, provide a pathway to academic success for language learners.

Acquiring language proficiency involves the integration of all language domains. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are naturally interwoven in the instruction of language learners within the Classroom Framework.

The language proficiency encompasses four **language domains**: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The language domains reflect the modality of the communication that is further delineated by the language proficiency levels and their model performance indicators. These language domains are as follows:

Listening – process, understand, interpret, and evaluate spoken language in a variety of situations

Speaking – engage in oral communication in a variety of situations for an array of purposes and audiences

Reading – process, interpret, and evaluate written language, symbols and text with understanding and fluency

Writing – engage in written communications in a variety of forms for an array of purposes and audiences

Among them is the recognition that individual language learners vary in their productive and receptive skills, with receptive language (listening and reading) generally developing prior to and to a higher level than productive language (speaking and writing).

English Language Proficiency

Thus, English Medium Learners may not be at a uniform level of English language proficiency across the four domains at any given point in time. This pattern may also be reflected in their native language proficiency. Unless English Medium Learners have received formal instruction in the language, the oral language or literacy may not be fully developed for their age level. The differential language acquisition of these students in the four language domains must be taken into consideration in instructional planning and assessment.

Taking an ecological perspective and recognizing the importance of factors that bilingual scholars have identified in the research literature, factors in this study were conceptualized as influencing individuals both directly and indirectly from the most proximal level to the student outward to the most distal:
individual (age) , home environment (maternal education and parental English skills), Locality (urban or rural), exposure to English at school , streams of study (science, commerce and arts) and in informal social situations, and, finally, the larger environment of schools as measured by school quality factors.

One particularly notable difference among ELL students is their previous literacy development in their native language. “Struggling reader” and “struggling writer” are terms found in the literature in reference to ELLs as well as monolingual English speaking students.

For the purposes of this study, literate adolescents are those who “can use reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking to learn what they want/need to

learn and can communicate/demonstrate that learning to others who need/want to know". This clarifies that adolescent literacy is more than a focus on reading comprehension and much more than decoding. It acknowledges the literature's emphasis on the interdependence and synergy of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking skills in the adolescent learner's construction of knowledge.

. . . the ability to use language, content, and reasoning in ways that are appropriate for particular situations and disciplines. Students learn to "read" the social meanings, the rules and structures, and the linguistic and cognitive routines to make things work in the real world of English language use, and that knowledge becomes available as options when students confront new situations. This notion of high literacy refers to understanding how reading, writing, language, content, and social appropriateness work together and using this knowledge in effective ways. It is reflected in students' ability to engage in thoughtful reading, writing, and discussion about content in the classroom, to put their knowledge and skills to use in new situations, and to perform well on reading and writing assessments, including high stakes testing.

In discussing the literacy needs of first and second language learners, offer a similar definition for "advanced literacy":

. . . In today's complex world, literacy means far more than learning to read and write in order to accomplish particular discrete tasks. Continual changes in technology and society mean that literacy tasks are themselves always changing, calling for skills in handling technical, bureaucratic, and abstract language; often simultaneously requiring that people get meaning from print, visual, electronic, and other kinds of media. In this context of change, literacy cannot be thought of as something that is *achieved* once and for all.

Content Knowledge

The integration of language and content should relate language learning, content learning, and the development of thinking, and should aim to find systematic connections among them.

Content knowledge refers to the amount and organisation of knowledge per see in the mind of the teacher and it makes the distinct subject matter. Having content knowledge means that students shows knowledge of the systems of the target language and competence in it. This means that the learner should have declarative knowledge of the language, i.e. knowledge about English grammar and phonetics, for instance, and be simultaneously proficient and confident users of it

The growing body of effective academic literacy development for adolescents basically divides into two types: literacy support strategies that are generically useful irrespective of classroom context and topic matter, and literacy support strategies that vary substantially in implementation according to disciplinary context. This section focuses on five sets of synergistic classroom practices found throughout the adolescent literacy research to improve academic literacy development, including reading comprehension, and content-area learning throughout content areas:

(1) Specific attention to improving reading comprehension through teacher modeling, explicit strategy instruction in context, and use of formative assessment;

(2) More time spent reading and writing–more reading and writing assignments accompanied by more reading and writing instruction;

(3) More speaking, listening, and viewing related to the discussion, creation, and understanding of texts;

(4) More attention to the development of critical thinking and metacognitive

skills as key parts of academic literacy tasks; and

(5) Flexible grouping and responsiveness to learner needs.

Thus, development of “high,” “advanced,” or “adolescent” literacy is intertwined with content-area instruction and therefore, a logical and important part of a secondary school content-area teacher’s task.

Review of the Related Literature

Brahmbhatt (1983) in a study Preparation of Language programme in English for pupils of Class VIII and its Effect on Achievement in relation to some Psycho-socio factors found that the language programme prepared by the investigator produced a better results so far as English Language Learning was concerned.The main effect of sex was not significant. And the programme proved to be more effective than usual material without being affected by sex, pre-achievement in language.

Joshi (1984) in a study Factors Influencing English Language Abilities found that the SC students were found to attain average growth level in each one of the six English language abilities whereas students of the non-SCs were found to be slightly higher than average in these abilities. The growth status of language ability was a function of structural factors operating within and outside the individual. There existed a significant relationship between intelligence and growth of various English language abilities. The growth status of language ability was found to be maximum among English graders of missionary schools followed by the students.

Desai (1986) in a study Diagnosis of Defects in Language learning Ability of Children studying in Std. IV and a tryout of a Remedial Programme for their correction found that most of the defects in language learnt during the first three

years of primary school comprised errors of spelling missing letters, while writing, bad hand writing, faulty pronunciation, wrong forms of tenses, and lack of knowledge of how to transform sentences. Weak teaching or total neglect of teaching in some schools by teachers was the main cause of wrong learning.

Jain (1987) in a study English language teaching in secondary school of Gujrat state found that objectives of teaching English have been English have been evolutionary process. With reference to the curriculum it was noted that the courses of studies are prepared keeping in view the objectives of teaching English. And with reference to the human resources it was found that in English medium schools all English teachers were graduates with English as their major subject and at post graduate level 66% teachers had studied English as a principal subject. With regard to classroom teaching, it was found that over 70% teachers still used lecture and translation methods.

Pradhan (1991) in a study Teaching of English at the +2 stage in Maharastra-retrospect and prospect found that students found it difficult to answers questions in full, requiring essay type answers. Students committed grammatical mistakes in their answers to the textual part and the grammar part. Students seemed to lack order and logic of thought in their answers There was an incredible gap in objectives, textbooks, teaching, evaluation procedure between English at the higher secondary and the senior college level.

Hakuta, Butler, and Witt (2000) studied How Long Does It Take English Language Learners to Attain Proficiency? They Found that rapid English language acquisition is unrealistic. The two Califrnia districts used in the sample are considered the most successful teaching English to limited English proficient students. In these high performing districts: Oral proficiency takes 3 to 5 years to develop; and Academic English proficiency takes 4 to 7 years to develop.

Meltzer and Hamann (2002) in a study "Meeting the Literacy Development Needs of Adolescent English Language Learners Through Content-Area Learning" found that for most learners, ELL and L1 English speakers alike, the development of advanced academic literacy skills across the content areas—necessary for full engagement with those content areas and the related intellectual development such engagement promises—is not something that transpires without explicit instructional support.

Olson (2006) in a study Ensuring Academic Success for English Learners found that a comprehensive system of schooling for ELLS includes the following nine elements: High quality and accessible preschool education, Supports for newcomers to meet needs of transition, A comprehensive program of English Language development, A program providing full access to challenging curriculum, High quality instruction and materials, Inclusive and affirming school climate, Valid, comprehensive, and useful assessments, Strong family and community partnerships, Schools structured to meet the particular needs of English learners.

National Council of Teachers of English (2006) in a study the role of English Teachers in Educating English Language Learners (ELLs) found that teachers need to get to know their students and about their home situations in order to be most effective. Writing well in English is often the most difficult skill for English language learners to master. Thus teachers should be aware that English language learners may not be familiar with standard American writing procedure like drafting, revision, editing, workshop, conference, audience, purpose, or genre. And the best way to help students learn both English and the knowledge of school subjects is to teach language through content.

Espinosa and López (2007) in a study Assessment Considerations for Young English Language Learners Across Different Levels of Accountability found that sequential bilingual children may have somewhat different patterns of development than monolinguals in certain aspects of language development in the short term. This may include vocabulary, early literacy skills, and interpersonal communication. It is important for early childhood educators to understand that code switching (switching languages for portions of a sentence) and languages mixing (inserting single items from one language into another) are normal aspects of second language. There is an enormous degree of variability and diversity of young children (beyond ethnic, to include English exposure, poverty, etc)

Carhill , Suárez- and Páez (2008) in a study, Explaining English Language Proficiency Among Adolescent Immigrant Students found that the average English language proficiency score of Chinese students was highest and showed the most within-group variation, whereas Spanish-speaking groups showed the lowest mean English language proficiency score. Chinese students were significantly higher in English language proficiency than all other groups.

Barrat and Huang (2011) in their study "The Relationship Between English Proficiency and Content Knowledge for English Language Learner Students in Grades 10 and 11 in Utah" found that higher the students scored on the English proficiency, the higher they scored on both math and language arts exams. English language learner students scored lower than non-English learners in both language arts and math.

Need and Significance of the Study

"The integration of language and content should relate language learning, content learning, and the development of thinking, and should aim to find systematic connections among them."

Previous researches established the critical role of English language proficiency in predicting academic achievement. The present study contributes to the literature in this area by examining some of the individual and social context factors that have been shown to influence the development of English language proficiency. In addition, the present study comparatively examines different groups and their language-acquisition patterns, which few studies have done . Finally, we extend previous works by specifically examining the language development of adolescent English language learners, a group about whom little is currently known.

In this study an attempt has been made to find the relationship between performance on English proficiency assessment and English language content assessments by English medium and Hindi medium students. This study compares the performance of English medium and Hindi medium students on the English language proficiency and content assessments.

Statement of the Problem

The study proposed to be undertaken by the investigator is stated as follows:

"Language Proficiency and Content Knowledge of English among +2 students in relation to Locality and Stream of Study"

Operational Definition of Terms

The present study involves the following key terms which operationally defined as below:

1. **Language Proficiency**

Language proficiency or linguistic proficiency is the ability of an individual to speak or perform in an acquired language.

Language proficiency is the ability to speak, read and/or write in that language. To be considered truly proficient, one should have advanced abilities in all three areas of communication.

2. Content Knowledge

Content Knowledge is knowledge about the actual subject matter that is to be learned or taught. The content to be covered in high school social studies or English is very different from the content to be covered in a graduate course on computer science or art history. Clearly, teachers must know and understand the subjects they teach, including: knowledge of central facts, concepts, theories and procedures within a given field; knowledge of explanatory frameworks that organize and connect ideas; and knowledge of the rules of evidence and proof. Teachers must also understand the nature of knowledge and inquiry in different fields. For example, how is a proof in mathematics different from a historical explanation or a literary interpretation? Teachers who do not have these understandings can misrepresent those subjects to their students.

Objectives:

The present study intends to achieve the following objectives:

1. To measure the Language Proficiency in English among +2 students with the help of Language Proficiency Test in English.
2. To Compare the Language Proficiency in English of English Medium and Hindi Medium Students at +2 stage.
3. To Study the Language Proficiency in English of English Medium students at +2 stage in relation to:

i. Locality (Urban and Rural)
ii. Stream of Study (Science and Arts)

4. To Study the Language Proficiency in English of Hindi Medium students at +2 stage in relation to:
   i. Locality (Urban and Rural)
   ii. Stream of Study (Science and Arts)
5. To measure the Content Knowledge of English among +2 students with the help of Content Knowledge Evaluation Test.
6. To Compare the Content Knowledge of English English Medium and Hindi Medium students of +2 Stage.
7. To Study the Content Knowledge of English of English Medium students at +2 stage in relation to:
   i. Locality (Urban and Rural)
   ii. Stream of Study (Science and Arts)
8. To Study the Content Knowledge of English of Hindi Medium students at +2 stage in relation to:
   i. Locality (Urban and Rural)
   ii. Stream of Study (Science and Arts)
9. To study the relationship between Language Proficiency and Content Knowledge of English Medium Students at +2 stage.
10. To study the relationship between English Language Proficiency and Content Knowledge of English Hindi Medium Students at +2 stage.

Hypotheses:

The present study incorporates following hypotheses for testing through the process of investigation.

1. There is no significant difference in Language Proficiency in English of English Medium and Hindi Medium Students at +2 stage.
2. There is no significant difference in Language Proficiency in English of English Medium students at +2 stage in relation to:
   i. Locality (Urban and Rural)
   ii. Stream of Study (Science and Arts)
3. There is no significant difference in Language Proficiency in English of Hindi Medium students at +2 stage in relation to:
   i. Locality (Urban and Rural)
   ii. Stream of Study (Science and Arts)
4. There is no significant difference in Content Knowledge of English of English Medium and Hindi Medium Students at +2 stage.
5. There is no significant difference in Content Knowledge of English of English Medium students at +2 stage in relation to:
   i. Locality (Urban and Rural)
   ii. Stream of Study (Science and Arts)
6. There is no significant difference in Content Knowledge of English of Hindi Medium students at +2 stage in relation to:
   i. Locality (Urban and Rural)
   ii. Stream of Study (Science and Arts)
7. There is no significant relation relationship between Language Proficiency and Content Knowledge of of English Medium students at +2 stage.

8. There is no significant relation relationship between Language Proficiency and Content Knowledge of English Medium students at +2 stage.

Delimitations of the Study:

The present study has delimited to the following conditions:

1. The study will be delimited to 600 students of +2 stage.
2. The study will be delimited to +2 students from Science and Arts stream of study.
3. The study will be delimited to Shimla District of Himachal Pradesh.

Methodology:

1. **Sample:** The sample of 600 students of +2 stage will be taken as the subject for the present study. Further 150 taken from Science stream of study and 150 from Arts stream of study from both urban and rural schools.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4">+2 students
600</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Urban School Students
300</td><td colspan="2">Rural School Students
300</td></tr>
<tr><td>Science Stream Students
150</td><td>Arts Stream Students
150</td><td>Science Stream Students
150</td><td>Arts Stream Students
150</td></tr>
</table>

Random Sampling Method will be used by the investigator.

2. Method:

The present study is the descriptive research in which survey method will be employed.

3. Procedure for data collection:

The data will be collected by the investigator by personally visiting and administration of the tests.

4. Tools:

In the present study, tests to be used for the purpose are as follows:

1) Language Proficiency Test in English (LPTE) to be prepared by the investigator.

2) Content Knowledge Evaluation Test for English Literature (CKET) to be prepared by the investigator.

5. Statistical Techniques used:

To test the hypotheses of the study t-test and appropriate tests will be used as per the requirement.

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